

**SPECIAL MEETING
COMMITTEE ON COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT**

June 19, 2007

**Aldermen Garrity, O'Neil,
Osborne, Gatsas, Duval**

6:00 PM

**Aldermanic Chambers
City Hall (3rd Floor)**

Chairman Garrity called the meeting to order.

The Clerk called the roll.

Present: Aldermen Garrity, O'Neil, Osborne, Gatsas, Duval

Messrs. Frank Thomas, Gene Forbes

Chairman Garrity advised that the purpose of the special meeting is discussion relating to a proposed Storm Water Utility Enterprise.

Mr. Frank Thomas, Public Works Director, introduced Mr. Gene Forbes of Hoyle, Tanner Associates and after brief comments a power point presentation was made, which was distributed to members of the committee. The presentation focused on the recent changes occurring in state law that would allow the City to establish a Storm Water Utility Enterprise to meet requirements of the federal government rather than as presently done through the operating budget, and issues relating to storm water utility needs.

Mr. Forbes closed comments by stating here in Manchester specifically the department is looking to retain a consultant to conduct an initial feasibility study. This feasibility study would be very preliminary, go no go decision kind of thing, we would estimate rough numbers for implementation. Find out what kind of hurdles there are and form a path towards implementation of a utility. So we are talking about general level of feasibility here that would see if it makes sense, and if it does the plan is to come back with an implementation plan to you sometime late fall in time for some capital planning next December.

Mr. Thomas stated just a follow up on the study, we are not in a position right now to tell you what the cost to implement this program is, what the exact or at least a more accurate dollar range on the issues that are out there. I had mentioned hundreds of millions of dollars, we want to fine tune that, we want to be able to

come back to you and define some of the pros, cons, further some of the potential road blocks and as a result we are proposing to move forward with a study to first of all gather information, determine what kind of information is going to be available to potentially feed into this ultimate program. We are also one of the major tasks of this study would be to have a one day workshop made up of both the public, private sector, elected officials basically people or groups that would be impacted by the implementation of the storm water utility to hear the pros and cons and to be able to at least hear and hopefully address some of these things. We are going to move slowly, we are not going to jump into this thing. We are not going to ask for approvals to implement the plan now, what we are going to do is to do the study, the study is going to be funded under the Environmental Protection Division budget we expect that the study will cost less than \$25,000 we will then be in a position to come back to this committee, give more detailed information, and as mentioned hopefully in the fall, early winter seek approval from the full Board of Mayor and Aldermen once we have the answers.

Alderman Osborne asked how much is out there now separated from the sewer as to the storm drain, what percentage do you think is done.

Mr. Thomas responded we are probably looking at 60% of the west side has been totally separated. Again as mentioned we have an ongoing CSO program but we can only justify doing separation, taking that storm drainage out of a pipe or building a separate storm drainage pipe, only if it is most cost effective than building a new sewer, so it has to be related to a sewer issue. We are still going to have problems throughout the city even once we finish the CSO program. You have Cemetery Brook as an example. Cemetery Brook goes through your ward I believe, all the way up to Grande Ave, that area there it's an open brook. That brook has problems and the people up there experience those problems during the last heavy rains we had. Our CSO program won't address those type of issues. Cemetery Brook itself is over a hundred years old, again anything we do CSO related is not going to benefit or upgrade that brook itself or the capacity in that brook, and that's why I am saying there is a large outstanding liability that the city is going to be facing over and above CSO and that's why we are looking at this funding mechanism over a long term basis to address it.

Alderman Osborne stated you said 60% of the west side, what percentage is on the east side.

Mr. Thomas responded the only separation that we have on the east side is the newer storm drains that have been constructed over the last 15 to 20 years.

Alderman Osborne stated that's not much.

Mr. Thomas responded no.

Alderman O'Neil stated you have to crawl before you walk, before you run and what I see probably an important next step is getting a consultant on board to allow us to make decisions. Any idea what the cost of that may be and what would be the possible funding source.

Mr. Thomas stated I am going to be moving forward with the preliminary study phase that is estimated to cost less than \$25,000, and the funding source is the Environmental Protection Division budget. The reason being it may be somewhat of a stretch to some people to say why are we funding a storm water utility study with user fees, however, for this initial low cost study we feel that if a storm water utility is implemented that will go hand in hand with the work we are doing on the CSO side ultimately reducing CSO costs. However, there is no funding in place this budget year. We want to do the small study to answer more of the detail questions that I am sure you all have. And that's why I am saying we go forward with this low cost study to try to fine tune the issues, the dollar values we are looking at, come back to you people in the fall, early winter, just before starting the budget process and hopefully being able to convince you, being able to answer all of your questions define for you what are funding needs are going to be to move forward. This is going to take to implement this program a good year and a half to two years. This is something that is not going to happen overnight, and there is going to be a sizeable cost to implement this in a fair way that can stand up to the scrutiny of any type of challenges. There is going to be a cost connected to this, but on the other side of the coin if the city does move ahead and implements a storm water utility these costs can be reimbursed to the city from the revenues that are collected down the line. We don't want to spend a lot of money if the Board of Mayor and Aldermen is not going to approve a storm water utility, so we want to spend a little now cover all our bases, get the information that you people need as policy deciders to make an intelligent decision, hopefully at some time down the road in the late fall we'll get that blessing and hopefully once we get that blessing you will also concur that we need some funding in the next budget to implement this thing.

Alderman O'Neil stated I think this makes a lot of sense. I think in one of the slides Mr. Forbes showed there is over 2,000 communities in the country that have a storm water regulations or user fee program in place. The south has been way out in front of us on this. The northeast has been playing catch up. But yet the issues haven't gone away for us so I think this makes a lot of sense, I know we get many different government magazines and you see articles about this and I certainly support moving to the next step as Mr. Thomas has suggested. For the record, we have a letter in front of us from Alderman Lopez and can we get that

into the record, because he mentions storm water in it. I'm not sure where that fits into this discussion but I know he talks about storm water, sidewalks and streets.

Alderman Duval stated without going into a whole lot of detail, when the city looked at this in 1993 and 1995 what were the results, what were the road blocks then, just briefly.

Mr. Thomas stated quite frankly it never got out of the level of the Highway Commission. The Highway Commission was considering the feasibility of funding our CSO work through a storm water utility instead of tacking it on to the sewer rates. It was the Commission's position at that time that we were better off to fund the CSO program with sewer user rates. We had the mechanism in place already and not inventing new thing for a sewer related issue. We are now looking to implement a mechanism for the storm drainage related issues.

Alderman Duval stated and the present position of the current Commission is what.

Mr. Thomas stated they have been informed that we have been going ahead with this thing, quite frankly I haven't asked them for a position statement.

Alderman Duval stated you made a comment in the presentation about the enterprise for storm water utility and somehow enhanced street sweeping efforts.

Mr. Thomas stated right now under our storm water program that's mandated by the federal government there are six minimum controls, and part of that is to clean your streets because if your streets are clean then the storm water that falls on the street that washes into the storm drains eventually outletting into the rivers isn't as polluted. So when we put together our six minimum controls we basically told the federal government we are going to sweep the streets at least three times a year. That was our practice to begin with. And that we are going to have an annual program of cleaning catch basins, we are going to clean x amount of catch basins a year. We are doing that anyway so we were able to convince the federal government to buy into these levels of services that we are already doing. As we move forward these requirements are going to get more stringent from the federal government. We can theoretically utilize the storm water utility to increase our level of street sweeping services, catch basin cleaning services, storm drain cleaning services, utilizing these funds. In addition the cost of what we are doing now street sweeping can be shifted into the storm water utility because it is being mandated by the federal government as one of these six minimum controls.

Alderman Duval stated he liked what he was hearing so far.

Alderman Osborne asked how much now this was costing the way it stands right now, and how much is coming out of the tax base, or the environmental protection.

Mr. Thomas stated I don't have a figure for you, some of the funding for the storm water program to date has been paid for out of the consent order that we worked out with the federal government on CSO, if you remember there was like \$5.6 million that had to be spent on alternative environmental type of projects. We knew that storm water was going to be an issue and so we allocated some of that \$5.6 million to implement the storm water management program, to set up the permitting to set up the ordinance that Rick Cantu has brought to you, so those were covered out of EPD money as part of the consent order. As far as the street sweeping and in catch basin cleaning and those type of things, those come out of our operating budget and quite frankly I don't have a number for you for that.

Chairman Garrity asked if he was looking for a motion from the committee.

Mr. Thomas stated basically I am looking for concurrence to continue to move forward as I outlined with the study coming back to the Committee periodically.

Alderman O'Neil so moved. Alderman Duval duly seconded the motion. Alderman Lopez thanked Alderman O'Neil for bringing up his letter stating but I think that the Finance Officer has a copy and the City Solicitor has a copy and I think the most important thing is, is to look at our special revenue account. As I indicated in my letter, if we have a surplus 50% goes into the rainy day fund and maybe to get this program off I offered that whether it be storm water utility, sidewalk, streets, according to the letter we should take a look at it with some recommendations from the Finance Officer and the City Solicitor and Bond Counsel if we turn around and put 25% in the rainy day fund and 25% of the surplus going to a special fund to take care of our streets and sidewalks and all of that. So I just brought it to the committee to pass it on.

Chairman Garrity called for a vote on the motion. There being none opposed the motion carried.

There being no further business to come before the special meeting, on motion of Alderman Duval, duly seconded by Alderman O'Neil, it was voted to adjourn.

A True Record. Attest.

Clerk of Committee